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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: MARCH 00, 2009

Summary: U.S. President Obama's statement emphasizing that "U.S. would not go in hot pursuit of extremists across the Afghan border" dominated headlines in all newspapers on Monday. Several major newspapers highlighted Secretary of State Clinton's remarks that the "new U.S. strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan relies heavily on civilian efforts." Some dailies reported that "Ambassador Holbrooke will visit India soon to discuss Washington's new strategy to defeat a resurgent Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan." Reports on abduction of "ten Khasadars (tribal cops), and six activists of a religious organization in Khyber Agency" received prominent display. Also highlighted by all newspapers was report that "President Zardari signed the summary for lifting Governor's rule from Punjab."

Most major dailies ran analytical editorials on the President Zardari's address to the Parliament and the prevailing geo-political situation of the region. The center-right national English daily "The Nation," observed that "it is hard to conceive a scenario helpful to U.S. objectives without the resolution of the core issue of Kashmir." Commenting on the suicide bombing at a mosque in Jamrud (FATA), the centrist national daily, "The News," noted that "we have only ourselves to blame if others see us a nation of barbarians and should not be surprised if, as a consequences, they sometime treat us accordingly." Dispelling the criticism on ISI, the second-largest Urdu daily, "Nawa-i-Waqt," opined that the "government is duty bound to tell the visiting envoy Holbrooke next week that Pakistan will stop cooperation in the war on terror if U.S. nonsense about Pakistan Army and ISI were not stopped." End Summary.

News Stories

"Troops To Stay Way From Pak Territory: Obama" "The News" (03/30)

"President Barrack Obama has said the US troops will not go in hot pursuit of extremists across the Afghan border into Pakistan - but demanded Islamabad hold up its end of the anti-terror struggle. "I haven't changed my approach," Obama said in an interview broadcast on Sunday on the CBS programme "Face the Nation," referring to the US missile strikes on militants. "If we have a high-value target within our sights, after consulting with Pakistan, we're going after them," the president said."

"Obama Rules Out Sending Troops inside Pakistan" "Dawn" (03/30)

"US President Barack Obama said on Sunday that US would pursue 'high-value' terrorist target inside Pakistan but would consult

Islamabad before doing so."

"New Strategy Relies On Diplomacy, Says Hillary" "Dawn" (03/30)

"Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says the new US strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan relies heavily on civilian efforts, and she is calling for all US diplomats to contribute. In a cable to US embassies and consulates abroad, Clinton says the success of President Barack Obama's plan depends on the State Department and the US Agency for International Development, whose ranks in Afghanistan and Pakistan are in line for boosts."

"Holbrooke To Visit India" "Dawn" (03/30)

"Top US diplomat Richard Holbrooke will visit India soon to discuss Washington's new strategy to defeat a resurgent Al Qaeda in Afghanistan that puts Pakistan at the heart of the fight."

"10 Khasadars, Six Religious Activists Kidnapped" "Dawn" (03/30)

"Ten Khasadars and six activists of a religious organization were kidnapped in Khyber Agency here on Sunday. Armed men kidnapped ten personnel of the Khasadar Force from a checkpoint in the Sheen Qamar area, about 30km west of Bara, official sources said."

"Governor's Rule Fate Sealed" "The News" (03/30)

"President Asif Ali Zardari on Sunday night signed the summary for the lifting of governor's rule from the Punjab on the advice of Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani, Presidency sources confirmed to The News."

"US To Remove Trust Deficit With Pakistan" "The News" (03/30)

"The United States on Sunday vowed to work towards building trust and wide-ranging partnership with Pakistan, with its top diplomat and military commander for the region saying the US focus under the new strategy was to help Pakistani institutions develop necessary capability to dismantle the al-Qaeda militants on its side of the Afghan border. US special representative for the region Richard Holbrooke and chief of the Central Command Gen David Petraeus said the US, Pakistan and Afghanistan will work trilaterally to overcome the "trust deficit" in some aspects of the relationship that has seen 'ups and downs' in the past."

"Pakistan Must Cut Ties With Afghan Extremists: Gates" "Daily Times" (03/30)

"US Defence Secretary Robert Gates urged Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency to cut contacts with extremists in Afghanistan who were "an existential threat" to Pakistan."

"TTP Bans Women From Shopping In Batkhela" "The News" (03/30)

"The Malakand chapter of the outlawed Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) outfit banned the movement and shopping by the womenfolk in the main bazaars of Dargai and Batkhela on Sunday. Sources said that shopkeepers in the markets had received threatening letters from the TTP, warning them to stop the women from visiting their shops."

"DPO, Ex-Nazim Among 5 Killed In Lower Dir Attack" "Dawn" (03/30)

"The District Police Officer of Lower Dir, Khurshid Khan, and former district nazim Alamzeb Khan were among five people killed when they were attacked by the kidnappers of a bank manager on Sunday."

"India Test-Fires New Version Of Brahmos Missile" "Dawn" (03/30)

"India's military on Sunday successfully tested a surface-to-surface version of the BrahMos cruise missile which it has developed jointly with Russia, a defense ministry spokesman said."

Editorials/Op-eds

"Under Indian Pressure," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (03/30)

"It is hard to conceive a scenario helpful to US objectives without the resolution of the core issue of Kashmir. . . It appeared that during his electoral campaign, Mr Obama visualized the subcontinent's situation correctly when he highlighted the importance of Kashmir as a central dispute between India and Pakistan and his emphasis on its resolution. There had also been talk of appointing a special envoy and the assignment was expected to go to former President Clinton and then India was excluded from Mr. Holbrooke's mandate. Mr. Holbrooke now is US Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan only. But the Obama administration's U-turn, obviously under pressure from India, is bound to cause widespread disappointment and prove a formidable stumbling block to its objective in the region."

"Golden Opportunity Goes Waste," an op-ed by Hamid Mir in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (03/30)

"President Barack Obama in his speech described the menace of terrorism as a cancer. However, a vast majority of the Muslims does not agree to this point of view. In fact, the actual cancer is injustice, and this injustice is being committed in Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan and Kashmir. The menace of terrorism will not be controlled unless this injustice is done away with."

"Straight Answers To Be Sought From Holbrooke" an op-ed by Mariana Baabar in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (03/30)

". . . Efforts are being made that Holbrooke meets the political and military leadership around one table and not separately and they all come up with a unified response. This is the only way that the US can stop playing one against the other like they have been doing in the past. Pakistan should show spine and draw red lines and clearly say that this is as far as they can go and no more. . . But what is not very welcome is the fact that the Foreign Office failed to come up with a consolidated response after Obama's address. The foreign secretary needs no permission, say several foreign secretaries, to come out with a detailed response while at the same time not contradicting the leadership."

"Death By Bombing," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (03/30)

". . . We live in a time of globalized instant communication to the most remote places on the surface of the earth. The world watches and judges, it sees things in black-and-white and is mostly unaware of the inflections and nuances that lie behind even this most barbarous of acts. We should not be surprised when our northwest borderlands are talked of by President Obama as 'the most dangerous place on earth' - because on the evidence of this blast and many other incidents, it is. We have only ourselves to blame if others see us a nation of barbarians and should not be surprised if, as a consequence, they sometimes treat us accordingly."

"America's Plan To Mount Pressure On ISI" an editorial note in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (03/30)

"American Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee Chairman Admiral Mike Mullen said in a CNN interview that some elements in Pakistan's ISI are helping out the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. U.S. envoy on Pakistan and Afghanistan Richard Holbrooke took the discussion forward by saying that he will increase pressure on Pakistan to stop ISI from helping Taliban and Al Qaeda. Despite the fact that the army and ISI personnel are being killed in the so-called war against terrorism stupid American commanders are in doubt about the ISI role. The government is duty bound to tell the visiting envoy Holbrooke next week that Pakistan will stop cooperation in the war against terrorism if U.S. nonsense about Pakistan army and ISI were not stopped."

"U.S. Propaganda Against ISI" an editorial note in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily "Ausaf" (cir. 10,000) (03/30)

"The new U.S. strategy and the baseless allegations against ISI clearly demonstrate that the United States maintains no good intention about Pakistan. And it wants to achieve its objectives by destabilizing Pakistan in the garb of this propaganda."

"A New Dawn For Af-Pak," an op-ed by Zeenia Satti in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (03/30)

"The AF-Pak strategy unveiled by Barack Obama on March 27 is good news for the Afghan people and bad news for the Afghan leadership. For Pakistan the opposite is the case: good news for its leadership but bad for ordinary Pakistanis. When the US coined the term Af-Pak, it created the assumption that the problems faced in Afghanistan and Pakistan were the same. Therefore, the solutions would also be the same. That has not happened. For Pakistan, it's all about militants and terrorists - who want to destroy civilization and hence they 'must be eliminated.' The PPP government will receive development aid and there will be no check on how it spends this aid, unlike in Afghanistan. This is something that the new policy should have considered because the chance that such funds will be squandered is always high."

"Obama's New Strategy," an op-ed by Talat Masood in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (03/30)

". . . President Obama perhaps deliberately made no mention of drone attacks, but the earlier leaks in the New York Times and other newspapers is a clear indication that these would continue and may even increase. . . Presence of sanctuaries in our tribal belt would be unacceptable to US and NATO. Question arises is the Pakistan Army even with the best of intentions in a position to regain control over South and North Waziristan and other parts of FATA. Equally if not more crucial is whether the civilian government can provide the leadership that is necessary to take the people along. After all this is not a conventional war and people's support is so vital in fighting insurgencies. ."

"Prime Minister Gilani's Assurance On Discontinuation Of Drone Attacks," an editorial note in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (03/30)

"Prime Minister Gilani's declaration, that there will be no drone attacks on Swat and Balochistan, is praiseworthy. Nonetheless it is essential for the United States to acknowledge the importance of the Pakistan's role in the war on terror, refrain from leveling unfounded allegations, and make sure to halt drone predators attacks on Pakistan immediately."

"Drone Attacks To Continue," an Op-ed by Ayaz A.Khan in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (03/30)

". . . CIA Director Leon Panetta's visit to Islamabad to meet Pakistani authorities signifies the great importance accorded by the Obama Administration to engage Pakistan on the serious issues of terrorism, extremism, and militancy, especially kidnappings and beheadings of foreigners. It is about time that the Obama Administration is warned that drone attacks on Quetta or anywhere in Balochistan will be considered an act of war; and the Pakistan Air Force and Pakistan Army could be ordered to shoot down such intruding Predator drones."

"No More Drones," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (03/30)

"There is need for concerted efforts by top level leadership to persuade the US to stop the drone attacks in FATA as well, because they are proving to be counter productive and an infringement of sovereignty of the country. The Parliamentary Committee on National Security has also expressed dissatisfaction over President Obama's failure to announce an end to the drone attacks and declared it a failure of our foreign policy. The leadership must also be very careful in welcoming the new Afghan strategy announced by the US President without going into its pros and cons. Reports from Washington quoting National Security Advisor, Defense Secretary and Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff are not encouraging and Pakistan will have to bear the brunt when it was implemented on the ground."

"Slavery For American Dollars," an op-ed by Ansar Abbasi in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (03/30)

"With the announcement of the new U.S. strategy by President Obama and the indication of 1.5 billion dollar annual assistance, Pakistani rulers are coveting U.S. assistance eagerly. President Zardari and PM Gilani have immediately welcomed the Obama Plan thoughtlessly. We don't criticize U.S. as it desires to destroy Pakistan for achieving its objectives like it did in Afghanistan and Iraq, but it is unfortunate that we, Pakistanis, have become a plaything in the hands of United States so easily, and now we are heading towards total destruction and the most awful civil war, which is perhaps vital to fulfill the U.S. plan in this part of the world."

"Shall We Dance," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (03/30)

"The change that Obama has initiated is the sending of a message to the Iranian people and its ever-suspicious government, a message delivered in Farsi by the thoroughly modern medium of satellite television and the internet. The message spoke of reaching out, of the need to redefine the relationship between the two countries and on Saturday we saw the first Iranian response to it. . . Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei dismissed the overtures from Obama saying Tehran does not see any change in US policy. The real change is that America is for the first time almost thirty years making a direct approach at both the highest and the lowest levels to the Iranian peoples and their government. Obama has demonstrated in his relations with our own government that he really is doing it differently. It is too early to say just how much 'difference' this is going to bring between us, and far too early to take at face value the dismissal of the Obama message by Khamenei."

"Presidential Address: The Need To Do A Lot More," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 125,000) (03/30)

"In his address to the joint sitting of the Parliament, President Asif Ali Zardari announced to continue supporting the American war on terror and American policy on Pakistan and Afghanistan. Contrary to the people's expectations, he voided to say any thing on drone attacks on Pakistan tribal areas and American propaganda against Pakistan's ISI and the army. The President did not inform the people of Pakistan about Indian conspiracies in the aftermath of Mumbai attacks and subsequent American pressure, despite the fact that this was the biggest event of the previous parliamentary year which created grave threats for the country's security."

"President's Address To Parliament And Requisites Of National Security," an editorial note in the Karachi-based, pro Taliban Jihadi Urdu daily "Islam" (cir. 15,000) (03/30)

"It is regrettable that President Zardari did not utter a single word about the U.S. drone attacks in his address to the joint session of the Parliament, however, Prime Minister Gilani told a good news that the U.S. administration would not launch drone attacks in Balochistan or any other part of Pakistan anymore. If the U.S. administration has accepted Pakistan's demand on this issue, then it is commendable, however if Pakistan has assured the U.S. to initiate a new military operation in the tribal areas by itself, then it will be a more precarious and explosive situation for Pakistan than the U.S. drone attacks."

Patterson